



CCM Testimony

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 15, 2023

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 168 towns and cities.

SB 1198 An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The School Indoor Air Quality Working Group

The bill would, among other things, (1) extend and expand the charge of the school indoor air quality working group, (2) establish an HVAC Portal to collect data and provide reporting for school air HVAC systems, (3) increase the grant amount awarded under the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system grant program, and (4) require the Commissioner of Public Health to establish an optimal thermal comfort range in school buildings and facilities.

This is an important and complicated topic. Each school and municipalities have differing needs, facilities and capacity. Extending and expanding the charge of the school indoor air quality working group and developing a portal for collecting and making available reports of inspections and evaluations of school indoor air quality and heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems is warranted. Information will be vital to ensure proper metrics and standards can be developed.

CCM continues to advocate for a funding increase in the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system grant program. The current appropriation of \$75 million, while appreciated, is inadequate to meet the needs of our schools. An increase to \$375 million ensures that the program is sustainable. In addition, CCM would urge the legislature to reconsider its prohibition on using local ARPA funds as matching funds for the grant and ensure a proper time period to ensure these grants can be properly executed. Furthermore, as the grant program is largely reliant on federal funding and therefore may not be financially sustainable, we are urging the legislature to amend the School Construction Grant Program to allow HVAC upgrades to be eligible for the program in subsequent years.

Town and city officials remain vigilant on all public health-related issues during the COVID-19 pandemic and the quality of indoor air in public schools is critical to the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff. We remain supportive of this concept and are ready and willing to be a partner, alongside other stakeholders and the state, in developing practical and attainable solutions.

CCM urges the committee to take the above-mentioned factors into consideration before acting on SB 1198.

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If you have any questions, please contact Mike Muszynski, Chief Strategy Officer of CCM at mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org or 203-500-7556.